



CIVIC GUILD OF OLD MERCERS'

Newsletter for the Year ended 30 June 2001

Guild Master:	B L Jacobs
Renter Warden:	H G J Worth
Junior Warden:	M J Houghton
Apprentice Warden:	R A Lawman
Honorary Clerk:	N J Watson

Message from the Guild Master

The following notes represent the random recollections of one who has been Master of the Civic Guild from June 2000 to June 2001, spanning the first six months of the third Millennium. During the course of the year I have represented the Guild as an official guest at a number of enjoyable dinners including that of the Mercers' Company Dinner to the Associated Companies and the annual dinners of the Old Mercers' Club, the Old Daunteaian Association, the Old Collyerian Club and the installation dinner of the Guild of Scholars of the City of London.

One of the pleasurable perquisites of Mastership is being able to arrange social occasions for Guild members and their ladies which accord with his own idiosyncratic tastes. Thus we were able to attend a concert at the Royal Academy of Music, visit the Salomon Centre near Royal Tunbridge Wells, enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour of the refurbished Royal

Opera House, listen to an interesting tour of the College of Arms by the Windsor Herald and a visit to Strawberry Hill, the gothic fantasy developed by Horace Walpole. Plans to visit the Ram Brewery and Stables had regrettably to be postponed owing to the foot and mouth disease outbreak. I hope the visit can be incorporated into my successor's programme. Finally the Head Master of Dauntseys' has invited me to be his guest for a day's cruise aboard Dauntseys' barque the 'Jolie Brise' which won the Tall Ships' Race last year. If I survive I should be able to report to those Guild members who have subscribed to participate in a similar cruise in September which was arranged by PGM David Griffiths. (Editor's note – this cruise is fully subscribed.) I also attended a reception on the 'Jolie Brise' when she was moored in the Pool of London.

Another occasion which was not realised during the past year is 'the Millennium Project'. This comprises a plan to promote greater awareness of the City of London among young people who have a connection with the City of London through their schooling at a Mercers' Company Associated School, and indirectly to heighten the awareness of the Guild amongst potential apprentices. It had been hoped to obtain funds from the 'Millennium Festival Awards for All' organisation but these had not been realised. The Guild Apprentice Warden has generously offered to bring these plans to fruition.

Supper for members after Court meetings has now become an established practice. We meet at the Baracca Restaurant which is 10-15 minutes walk from Guildhall where Court meetings are usually held.

One of the more interesting discussions at a Court meeting arose when a court member asked how it was that comparatively few Guild members became members of a Livery, especially since one of the purposes of the Guild is to encourage membership of a Livery Company. It became clear from the ensuing discussion that the main reason was the perceived cost involved in Livery membership. Those costs vary considerably; perhaps our Guild could do more to make available a table of costs and conditions including availability of places. (Editor's note – please see article on joining Livery Companies on page 2).

Meanwhile the Honorary Clerk and the Guild Apprentice Warden have been very active recruiting new members to the Guild and 'inroling' Apprentice applicants at the Chamberlain's Court. I am beholden to both of them for the support they have given me during my year as Master.

Present membership of the Guild is 181. When this figure is compared with the membership of the Old Mercers' Club alone of 485 I ask myself whether it is possible that there is a pool of members of old boys' and girls' clubs who are discouraged from applying for Guild membership on account of the misunderstanding of the costs involved. The Court may wish to examine this possibility.

There remains one further matter that all Guild members might wish to consider and pass their views to the Court through the Honorary Clerk. I wonder whether there is a case for a two year rather than a one year tenure of office for the Master of the Guild. As one who has come to the end of his one year term, I can see considerable merit in a two year tenure for my successors. Granted that I am something of an opsomath, it has taken me the best part of my year of office to acclimatise myself to the demands of the post. Moreover as I have indicated above, some of the Master's activities span more than one year from conception to realisation. I note there exists a precedent for a two year term. (A E Watts 1949/50 & 1950/51) I observe that at least one other Guild appoints its Master for a period of two years.

To summarise, I believe that the Guild has prospered during the past year and that the hopes and ambitions so ably designated by PGM R G Edwards in his excellent publication 'The First Fifty Years' have not been disappointed. J.J.



Guild Master Professor B L Jacobs with his wife Patricia at his Installation Dinner in Tallow Chandlers' Hall